

Gen Trends

July 2008

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

The Big Click

If there is one universal way to engage today's emerging generation of consumers, it is through technology. While this may appear obvious, the subtleties of doing so are more elusive. Regardless of the platform, there are five characteristics that all electronic marketing efforts share if they are to be successful with young buyers:

Informal personalization –

Emerging consumers have come of age immersed in a world that treats them impersonally. After all, who knows their neighbors anymore? But on the Internet, the sites they visit address them by name, if they have been willing to share that name on a previous visit. If they are willing to embrace this kind of relationship with other sites, it is incumbent upon you and your organization to do the same. Remember the old saying? The most important word to anyone is their own first name. You don't need anything other than a first name and a valid e-mail to begin. The rest will come as the relationship evolves.

Relevant content – The old saying "sell the sizzle, not the steak" is counterintuitive for engaging emerging consumers. Successful marketers have discovered that value offered up front is the most effective way to establish a relationship with those in this young generation. Whether it's an excerpt of a book, a free upgrade on a product, the latest issue of an electronic magazine, or something else of perceived value, young visitors expect to walk away with value every time they visit a site.

Retailer Amazon.com and others have mastered the art of suggestive selling by matching visitors' navigation through the site with the

electronic data they gather using cookies and other applications. While no one is advocating the surreptitious use of this technology, research indicates that emerging consumers are accepting of this practice provided it moves the relationship forward in a productive way. How can you accomplish this in your marketing and service efforts?

Intuitive navigation – Call it the Amazon.com effect. Granted Amazon has hundreds of programmers working 24-7 to make sure you not only find what you need but also what you don't know you need. Suggestive selling used to consist of "Would you like fries with that?" Amazon.com, and other organizations like it, have taken this to an entirely new level. You, on the other hand, may be your organization's webmaster, top salesperson and chief custodian. Unfortunately emerging consumers do not draw that distinction. That said, development of intuitive navigation takes little more than being able to place yourself in the users' minds and create a system that most visitors would be able to understand with little effort. Then observe people navigating the site and modify the navigation that they find difficult.

Remember, this is not about engineering. It's about common sense and logic.

[Click here](#) to read two more critical points on this topic.

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"GenTistics"

In a recent Gallup poll, 30% of workers surveyed said that they don't plan to retire until they're over the age of 65 - an 18% increase from a decade ago.

Check out Bob's new blog.

[Click Here](#)



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Recruitment Makeover

The U.S. Military has come a long way from its “Uncle Sam Wants You” posters. Simulators and gaming are the new thing. Among the latest trend is an interactive video game that allows users to enlist and test military decisions. Already downloaded by 9 million gamers, it will soon be accessible on mobile phones and in video arcades.

The Armed Forces embrace this technology to establish contact with prospects. They can be found on almost every internet platform: blogs, social networks like MySpace, and on YouTube. One will find the latest use of web technology on the GoArmy.com website – forums, downloadable podcasts and plenty of video. It features an interactive character who instantly answers questions in a conversational way.

All of the branches use simulators to engage potential recruits. Both the Army and the Navy offer virtual flights with the Blue Angels, an imitation helicopter ride, and a Humvee ride through simulated battles. Where can you find them? At public events like rodeos, NASCAR and skydiving events, and even on Florida’s beaches.

The military is at the forefront of target and network marketing as well. To identify potential applicants, the Navy uses customer relationship management tools, saturated with demographic information on youths who meet the minimum enlisting requirements. They have surpassed most enterprise businesses in the use of sign-on bonuses. Armed forces referral programs award new recruits with up to \$2000 for leads. The Army awards as much as \$40,000 for soldiers recently graduated from high school.

Workforce Management

Case Study Corner

Do you feel it is necessary for Matures and Baby Boomers to consciously stretch themselves to become educated about those in the younger generations? Is this necessary to stay competitive with them in the workforce? We have had to lay off an unusually large number of employees in the last year and I am wondering how many of the Matures and Boomers will be unable to compete for positions and transition into new companies.

In one word, yes. The older generations possess a considerable depth of knowledge about their jobs and expertise. But that said, information and knowledge is so readily available today that the emerging generations can develop much of this expertise faster than ever before, if they so desire. To validate your point, we do see those in older generations struggling to land new jobs especially if the decision maker is an emerging manager. Veteran applicants have to be able to demonstrate that they have current knowledge to offer, coupled with the computer skills necessary to thrive in organizations that increasingly rely on technology for everything. While some veteran managers may argue that they possess the wisdom and experience lacking in the younger generations, organizations do not necessarily value this wisdom especially if it has been developed within another company.

So, what should these veteran workers do? Here are a couple of quick suggestions: 1) Stay current on the technology and evolving knowledge in your field. This may sound obvious, but I am surprised at how many individuals do not. 2) Spend more time with emerging co-workers. Serve on committees or projects with them. Ask for their assistance. Express curiosity about their approach to work. Your efforts have to be sincere and you may encounter some difficulty with their methods or habits, but little change comes easily. You will probably find some of their approaches refreshing and creative. Besides, stretching yourself will ensure job versatility.

Unraveled When Unplugged

Consumers are more connected and have access to more info than they’ve had in the past, thanks to the internet and wireless communication devices. According to research conducted by the Solutions Research Group, losing that access, even for a short time, creates disconnect anxiety among 68% of people of all ages. Worrying occurs among people from all generation groups at varying levels of intensity and for differing reasons. What’s causing the angst?

Safety for family was a top concern, especially among Gen Xers and Boomers who are keeping tabs on their teens and tweens. Another cause for nervousness in this group is managing the constant stream of information and workflow.

Among the Millenials, being disconnected from their social network is panic-inducing. Missing one instant or online message can make or break their attendance at an event. Matures feel a minimal amount of malaise generated only when cut off from their younger family members via cell phones or email.

Gen Xers and Millenials both share a lack of organization when they are unplugged. Cell phones, PDA’s and software programs are equipped with calendars, pin numbers, and contact lists in their memory so that people don’t have to keep it in theirs.

SWAT Moms

Where can employers find a skilled temp relatively cheap? On the playground and at PTA meetings. Popularized by *WSJ*’s Sue Shellenbarger, the moniker SWAT stands for “Smart Women With Available Time” and it describes the trend of highly educated professional women who choose to leave their full-time jobs to spend time caring for children at home. These women sometime re-enter the workforce temporarily to help companies implement short-term projects.